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- ▶ Worked closely with the Obama administration to extend **hospital visitation rights for LGBT couples.**
- ▶ Fought to bring marriage equality across the country. Led the effort to **enact marriage equality in Washington, D.C.**, and organized the key religious voices in support of marriage.
- ▶ Launched a **campaign to work to pass marriage equality legislation in New York** and helped elect three new voices for marriage in the state Senate.
- ▶ **Launched NOMExposed.org** to hold the National Organization for Marriage accountable for the misinformation and hate spread in its effort to thwart equality.
- ▶ Developed the Countdown 2010 Grassroots Campaign calling for a **fair and inclusive ENDA.**
- ▶ **Deployed 39 staff to 17 states to work for pro-equality candidates** and recruited more than 4,500 volunteers to support these candidates.
- ▶ HRC's **Corporate Equality Index expanded with 337 employers reaching 100 percent scores, the most ever.**
- ▶ Signed 50 **adoption agencies** across the country to implement LGBT-inclusive policies and practices.
- ▶ **HRC is only LGBT national partner organization to join the national non-partisan citizenship and voter registration program Ya Es Hora.** HRC mobilized more than 500 volunteers for 40 citizenship workshops in 20 communities.
- ▶ Led the campaign to **oust bigoted Arkansas school board member Clint McCance.**
- ▶ Launched an innovative program to **empower transgender job seekers who are unemployed or underemployed** by providing essential skills training to make the most of the job market.
- ▶ Led the call for Mormon leader Boyd Packer to **renounce his discriminatory, homophobic remarks.**
- ▶ Worked with the Joint Commission, which accredits most hospitals, to **establish LGBT-specific accreditation standards** to eliminate discriminatory policies in healthcare facilities.
- ▶ In response to high profile anti-LGBT bullying and youth suicides, **launched a new website to help address bullying in elementary schools.**
- ▶ Formalized a partnership with National Education Association (NEA) to **extend the reach of HRC's Welcoming Schools program.**
- ▶ Successfully lobbied the Obama administration to issue guidance permitting employees to take **federal family and medical leave to care for a same-sex partner's child** and **extending federal domestic violence protections to include victims in same-sex relationships.**

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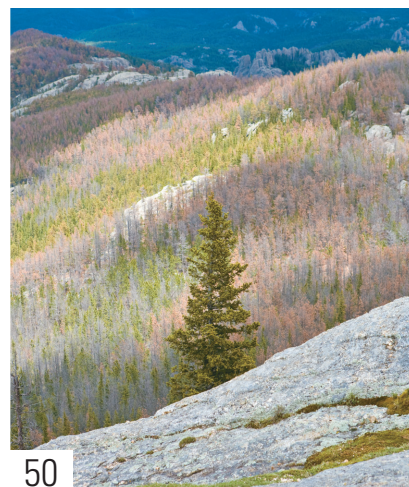
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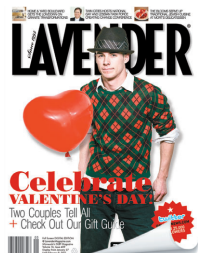
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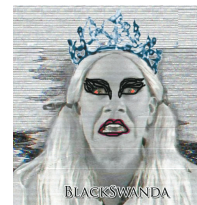


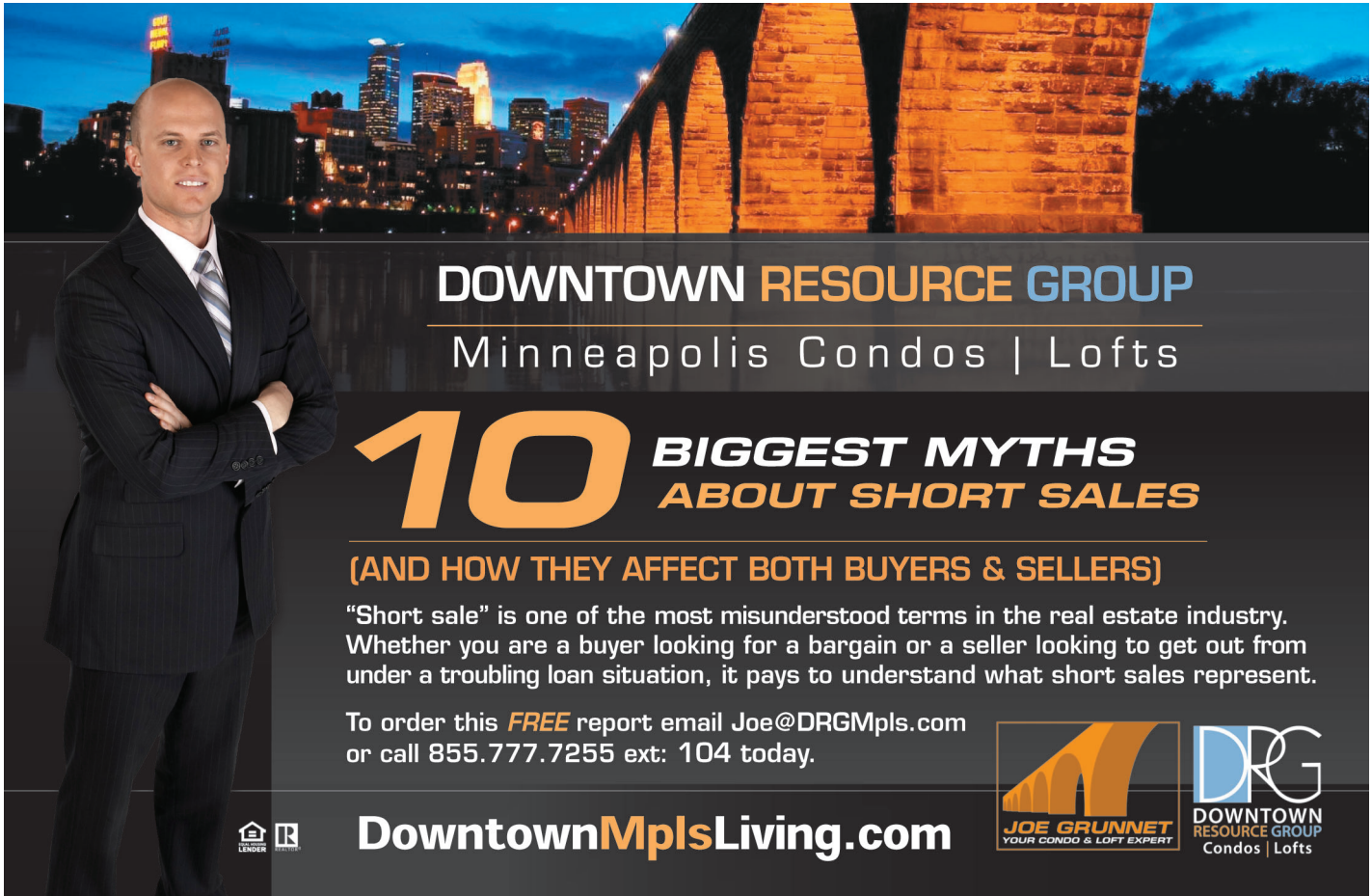
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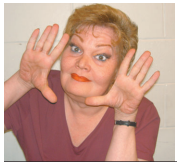
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Talk Isn't Cheap



Let me stress: This essay is not an accusation that Sarah Palin's grammar of divisiveness and vocabulary of violence directly set mass shooter Jared Loughner off on his January 8 rampage.

But words are powerful, and do influence—if not trigger—actions. Words are not important *then*, but irrelevant *now*. You can't have it both ways.

Upon what is the nation's multibillion-dollar advertising industry predicated if not the premise that words (and images) convince people to buy product? Why do politicians of all stripes speechify and spend to the hilt for media coverage if not to capture votes?

What we read, see, and hear sways us. What we do with information is each individual's responsibility.

No single factor can be blamed for Loughner's rampage that left a 9-year-old girl, a federal judge, and four others dead, as well as three injured, including gravely-wounded Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords (Democrat-Arizona).

But Palin's US map targeting her opponents in crosshairs (if you buy "surveyor's marks," call me about my swamp properties) was created to impart *some* intentional message.

Words always have had import, and listeners who will carry them out. English King Henry II's purported "Who will rid me of this

meddlesome priest" literally was executed on Archbishop Thomas Becket, who was murdered on December 29, 1170.

Unbalanced people are not necessarily stupid. They may be acting under some inner, twisted logic. *Time* Magazine's "Special Report" on Tucson in its January 24 issue noted that schizophrenics generally don't resort to violence. But Loughner, if he is indeed suffering from that illness, laid in a shotgun and 9mm Glock pistol with 30-round extended magazines.

It's as presumptuous to assert what didn't trigger a killing spree as to declare what precipitated Loughner's rampage. No single word did.

However, words, like snowflakes mounting to critical mass preceding an avalanche, can create an atmosphere encouraging intolerance and then violence, evidenced more mundanely in homes and classrooms, as well as from the bully pulpit.

A teacher's repeated slights about race, weight, or gender can render the named child more vulnerable to bullying. Teacher, preacher, parent—an authority figure's words parent—give their willing listener tacit permission to act.

In the aftermath of the shooting, President Barack Obama urged, "It's important for us to pause for a moment, and make sure that we're talking with each other in a way that heals, not in a way that wounds."

How? Watch your words. **E.B. BOATNER**

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LETTER

Arts Organizations Left Out

Recently, a "Best Of" article ["On the Townsend," *Lavender*, December 16] highlighted the Best Productions of 2010 in Minneapolis/St. Paul. On this list were many fantastic performances from area theater companies, both large and small. The list was great; however, there seemed to be a large amount of arts organizations left out.

It's clear that the Twin Cities are an amazing place for theater, but it would be nice to see a more comprehensive list involving other arts organizations such as the Walker, Minnesota Opera, Minnesota Orchestra, and Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra.

The definition of "production" in context is a "literary or artistic work presented to the public." The above organizations and many others have wonderful productions, including orchestral music, opera, dance, and other art forms to offer the GLBT community. Perhaps they could be featured as well in future issues.

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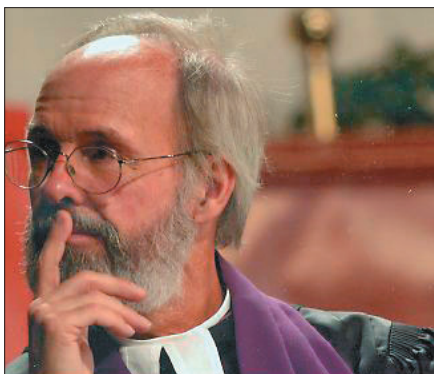


Besen Will Visit Minneapolis on Truth Wins Out Tour



ACTIVIST WAYNE BESEN of Truth Wins Out is on an 11-state tour to discuss the harm caused by programs that claim to turn gay people straight through prayer and therapy. At each stop, he shows a multimedia presentation pointing out the psychological damage caused by these unscientific religious programs. On January 31, 6:30-8 PM, he will be at the Hilton Garden Inn, 1101 Fourth Avenue South, Minneapolis. For other regional appearances, visit www.TruthWinsOut.org.

Wayne Besen. Photo Courtesy of Truth Wins Out



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Reverend Greg Renstrom. Photo Courtesy of Reverend Greg Renstrom



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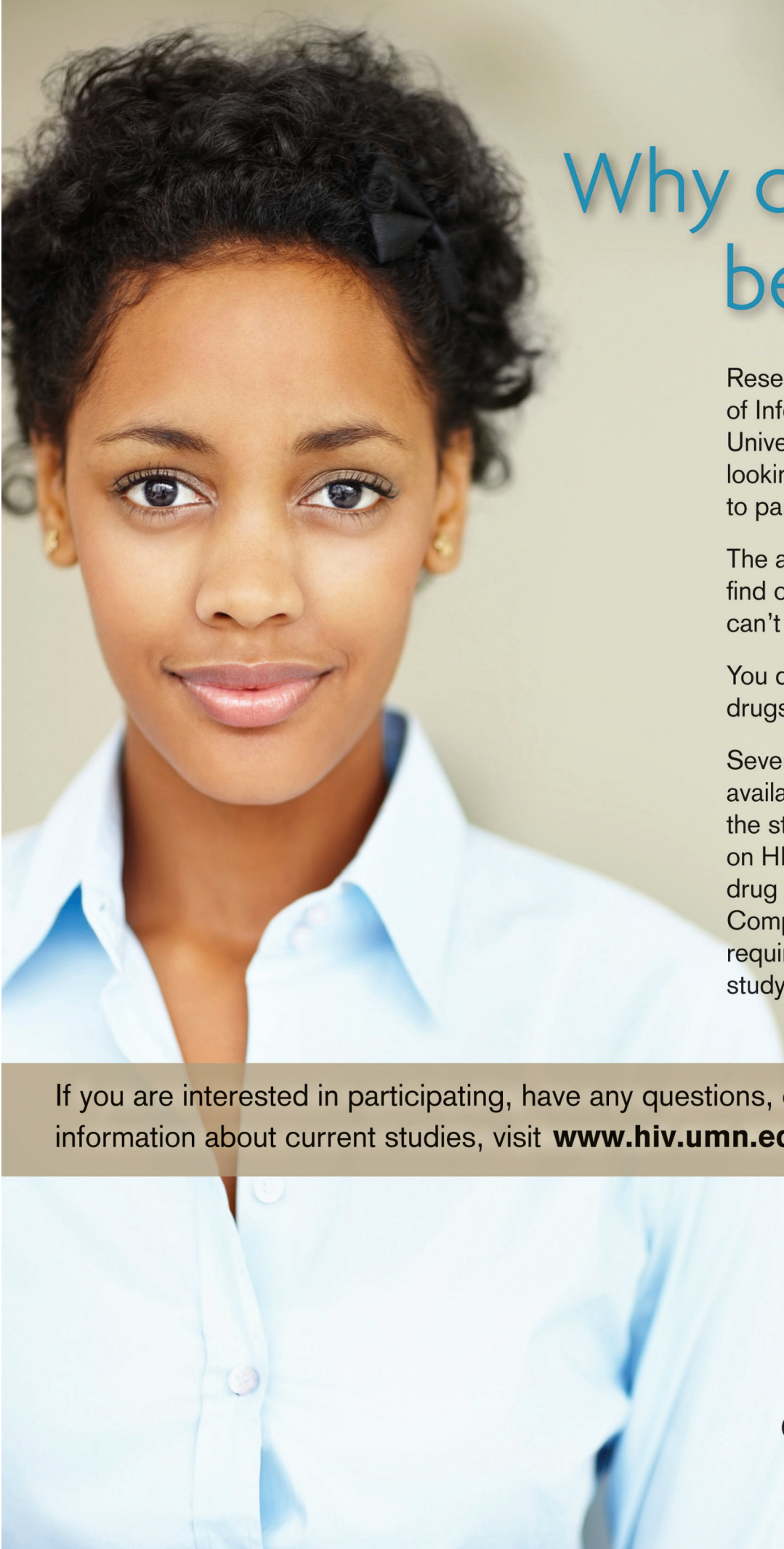
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GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Interviews with Cheryl Gordon and Michele Harris & Richard Adams and Ross Kylo

Let's face it: Finding someone, winning someone, and keeping someone who is agreeable to finding, winning, and keeping *you* takes diplomacy, along with courage, nerve, balance, and stamina.

Lavender recently approached two long-term couples—21 and 29 years, respectively—asking the partners, Cheryl Gordon and Michele Harris, and Richard Adams and Ross Kylo, to share.

CHERYL GORDON AND MICHELE HARRIS

How long have you been together? Tell us a bit about yourselves.

Harris: Cheryl and I met in 1990, and have lived together for 21 years. We started a marketing and design firm together called Carbon Creative in the basement of our first house in 2000, which we now run from the first floor of our duplex in Uptown. We have twins, a boy and girl, who are 6 years old.

When and where did you meet? Was it an epiphany? Was it mutual, or did one pursue?

Gordon: We met at a bar in Champaign, Illinois, way back in the last century. We saw each other from across the room. Michele asked me to dance. I said no. She ran away before I could explain why—I was sick—and then avoided me each time we saw each other for the next several weeks. I was crazy about her from the minute I saw her. We talked on the phone for hours, and I quickly knew she was as interesting and funny as she was attractive. We can still talk for hours.

Harris: It was pretty “aha!” from the start for me—kind of the lust-at-first-sight thing.

Of course, you really have to get to know someone before you can call it *love*, but there was definitely something magical between us. That had also been the first night in my life that I had asked anyone to dance, and she turned me down. I even wrote about it in one of my novels. [Harris is C.M. Harris, local author of *The Children of Mother Glory* and *Enter Oblivion*]. Once we got to know each other, we clicked on a more cerebral level. We wanted a lot of the same things out of life, and coupled with our attraction, it all went pretty U-Haul from there.

Is Valentine's Day an important or fun one for you? Do you still try to do something “special” together? Cards? Mushy, Romantic, Funny?

Harris: We still try to do a little something for each other for Valentine's Day. But I think we both enjoy watching the kids get their Valentines even more.

Gordon: Usually funny.

What's your most memorable or embarrassing Valentine's Day?

Gordon: A couple years ago, we were in Florida at my Mom's winter home. Michele had my Valentine's gift sent to us. Let's just say it was a very personal plaything. Naturally, my family wanted to know what was in the box. We left it to their imagination. I don't know which of us was more embarrassed.

Is one of you the Romantic and the other the Pragmatist?

Harris: I'm generally more pragmatic and single-minded, while Cheryl is more idealistic and empathetic.

Obviously, every day can't be a perfect Valentine. Have you any tips for keeping Valentine's Day alive over the years?

Gordon: It's easy to get lazy. There's no shame in scheduling time to be romantic. Someone once told us if the dirty dishes in the sink are bothering you, *wash* them—don't whine about it. We were at a stage in our relationship where we were power-struggling over things like that. Somehow, that advice was all we needed to move on.

How does Valentine's Day today compare to when you were kids? Did you yearn to give or get a Valentine to/from a sweetheart of the “wrong” gender?

Harris: Ooh, another thing I've written about. I sent Secret Admirer notes to a girl I was crazy about. She actually reciprocated for a while. Then, it all came crashing down on us once the parents got involved. But in a way, that gave me hope. I always wanted to find my “soul mate” and be “married,” without really understanding the scope of such a commitment. Caring about someone has to happen every single day, not just once a year.

What else would you like to share about the spirit of Valentine's Day?

Gordon: At some point early in our relationship, we decided that we were OK with being in a codependent relationship. We love to play, and developed many of the same likes and dislikes. If I'm going on a bike ride or a movie or out for a drink, I can't think of anyone I'd rather go with than Michele.

Michele: Read Dan Savage!

NOW



Photo by E.B. Boatner

CHERYL GORDON (LEFT) AND MICHELE HARRIS



Michele Harris (left) and Cheryl Gordon. Photo Courtesy of Cheryl Gordon and Michele Harris

RICHARD ADAMS AND ROSS KYLLO

Tell us a bit about yourselves.

Adams: I've been in private practice [psychology] for the past 30 years. Seven years ago, Ross was certified as a Life Coach, and we reorganized my company into ours, Garuda Coaching & Consulting.

Kyllo: I also work for Minneapolis Public Schools as a Special Education Assistant in the area of autism.

How long have you been together? When and where did you meet? Was it an epiphany? Was it mutual, or did one pursue?

Adams: We will have been together 29 years this Valentine's Day. We met in the fall of 1981—neither of us recorded the specific date. [Adams had been invited to a dinner as a possible match for the host. That didn't happen, but he spotted Kyllo.] I was immedi-

ately attracted. I also thought he was out of my league. We left that evening without any plans to get together, and, honestly, I didn't even see it as a possibility. In retrospect, the attraction was mutual, but neither of us had the courage to pursue it.

Kyllo: I walked in the door, and seconds later, noticed Richard sitting on the sofa—I can still see him in that moment. I can't say I said to myself, "That's the man I am going to be with for the rest of my life." However, it was as if something came into my heart, and I couldn't wait to meet him.

[Early in 1982, the two met again by chance, each of them on the eve of a trip.]

Adams: Still cautious not to betray much, we thought it might be a good idea to get together. I got back on Valentine's Day, and nervously called Ross. I suggested the Zoo-gie's First Annual Valentine's Day Ball at the Minneapolis Hyatt Hotel. The extravaganza

featured Divine. I was intrigued, but Ross had no idea who Divine was.

Kyllo: We sat at a table very close to the front, and when Divine came out. I was horrified. Even though I'd been operating as a "gay" man for six years, I was still fairly prudish, and was very judgmental of "camp." When Divine came out, and I witnessed Richard's extreme enjoyment, I thought to myself, "Oh, dear, what have I done?" It was great evening, however, and our second date at Winfield Potters in St. Anthony Main in Minneapolis made our union a done deal.

Is Valentine's Day an important or fun one for you? Do you still try to do something "special" together? Cards? Mushy, Romantic, Funny?

Adams: We decided Valentine's Day was our anniversary, and returned the Hyatt for 10 years. We do something special every year, usually going out, but we both love to cook,



Ross Kylo (left) and Richard Adams
Photo Courtesy of Ross Kylo and Richard Adams

Photo by E.B. Boatner

ROSS KYLLO (LEFT) AND RICHARD ADAMS

and increasingly often, we celebrate at home.

What's your most memorable or embarrassing Valentine's Day?

Adams: The most memorable Valentine's Day was in 1986, when we traveled to Bali. We arrived exhausted after Pan Am's final Pacific flight, a train trip across Java, and a precarious bus-on-a-ferry ride to Bali. We kept the Hyatt tradition alive by spending three days we really couldn't afford at the Bali Hyatt, with drinks delivered to our beach chairs by liveried waiters.

Kylo: I even managed to go down to a hotel shop, and find a stuffed animal to give to Richard—another tradition we started when we first met! We still have the two originals, "Stiggy and Finney."

Obviously, every day can't be a perfect Valentine. Have you any tips for keeping Valentine's Day alive over

the years?

Adams: After a year, we moved into a house I'd been renting in Seward, and we lived there a year, and worked out our first conflicts. We then bought [our present] house, over the past 27 years renovating every part of it. I look forward every day to coming home to Ross in this house. We've worked hard, and fought about just about everything. It all just brought us closer, knowing one another better, and loving one another more.

Kylo: We love to travel. We enjoy cooking, listening to music, and hiking in nature. There are times when I play the piano, and Richard will sing. We both enjoy the mindless box [TV], and spend many evenings together in front of it. We enjoy entertaining, and while we do go out, the older we get, staying home is the preferred option. Our home is probably my second greatest love—Richard being the first, of course!

What else would you like to share about the spirit of Valentine's Day?

Kylo: I think that "love" can only be defined individually, and as to what "love" feels like, all I can say with certainty is that for 29 years, I have never *not* wanted to be in a relationship with Richard. I have certainly—at times—been "fed-up"; "pissed-off"; "sick-and-tired" of; or "disappointed" by aspects of our relationship, and yet, I have always wanted to find ways to make it work. I do feel that our honesty with one another, as painful as it may be at times, has played a key role. We say the words "I love you" often in any given day—and that works for us! Valentine's in many ways rejuvenates my commitment. I/we have saved every card given and received, and the sentiments [printed] in the cards, and what we personally wrote inside, still hold true in my heart. I'm still very much "in love" with and "love" my partner, Richard.

valentine's gift guide

Grand Hand Gallery

Bill Siggelkow (Minn.): Relationship candles. Can be arranged multiple ways to create different "stages" of a relationship: first kiss, cuddle, marriage, engagement. \$75-\$95.

Heinz Brummel (Minn.): Large sterling silver peace sign necklace on chain. \$300.

Dick Huss (Minn.): Gold leaf glass cherry. \$250.

Karin Jacobson (Minn.): Flame necklace with Garnet, recycled yellow gold. \$674. Flame earrings with Garnets, recycled yellow gold. \$522.

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valentine's gift guide

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gift guide

valentine's

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gift guide

valentine's

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Earrings: 14kt white gold tension wires with jasper and black onyx. \$145.

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valentine's

Wanda Wisdom's Picks

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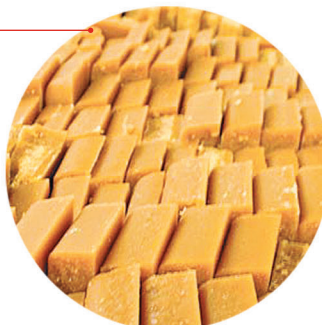
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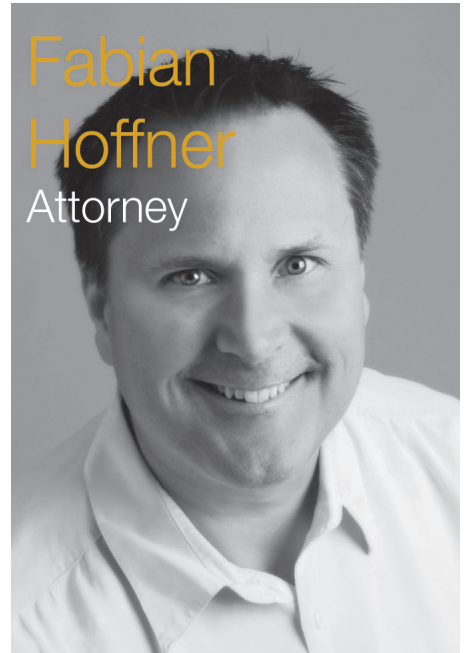
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Interview with Diane Follestad

Diane Follestad, co-owner with her husband, Doug, of Granite Transformations since 2008, recently spoke with *Lavender* about wonders awaiting your home through engineered stone. Founded 15 years ago, the company now has 80 franchises in the United States, offering environmentally-friendly composite granite and Trend glass tiles and surfaces.

Tell us about engineered stone.

It all started in Italy, where a traveling Aussie saw these gorgeous engineered granite slabs, which were used only as flooring. He approached Trend, Granite Transformations's parent company, and a proprietary technique was established to fabricate one-piece countertops.

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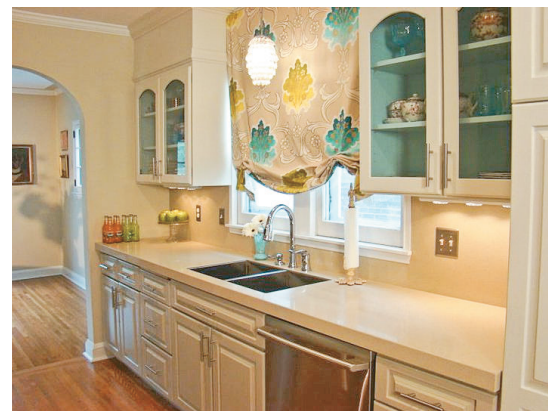
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There is no guesswork on the quality, because no matter what slab you choose, you will have uniform strength, durability, and long-lasting beauty. The slabs all come with a lifetime warranty, and you will have expert installation by our crew—everyone holds a certification to work with our products.

Your motto is: “Affordable Renovations Without the Mess!” What may a customer expect?

The customer makes an appointment with one of our Design consultants for a free, in-home consultation to measure the surfaces, show all of the colors of our products, and provide the price. Besides assisting you

with your granite color choice, we are also equipped with a large array of sinks, faucets, and cabinet hardware choices. You are able to see all of our products in the lighting of your home, and next to your cabinetry.

A week or so later, an installer returns to make a pattern, or template, of all of the areas to be covered: countertops and backsplashes. The granite is then cut and fabricated to the exact measurements in our fabrication shop in Shoreview.

Finally, the installers come back with everything—granite, tile, sink, faucets, whatever was ordered—and install it. It usually takes just one day to transform your space—with no demolition! It's a very clean and precise process—no large saws or power tools are used.

One thinks of granite in the kitchen or bath. Where else do you suggest?

We do love our granite in the kitchen and the bath, but we also install granite on fireplace fronts, shower surrounds, window sills, curved walls in office spaces, floors, bars, motor homes, and boats. The sky's the limit!

One also thinks of money when considering granite as an option. Is granite competitive with other materials in general use?

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surfaces where you prepare food. We are National Sanitation Foundation (NSF)-certified, so we can also be in restaurants and schools.

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One thing to consider is the cost and mess of demolition—that someone will charge \$300 to \$500 to pull it out, and haul it away.

Anything else you'd like to share?

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Using Trend and Granite Transformations products may contribute to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) points. Our granite and recycled glass slabs use 60 percent less raw materials—60 percent lighter—a consideration for your cabinetry and shipping/fuel costs. We are also reducing the number of old countertops going to landfill.

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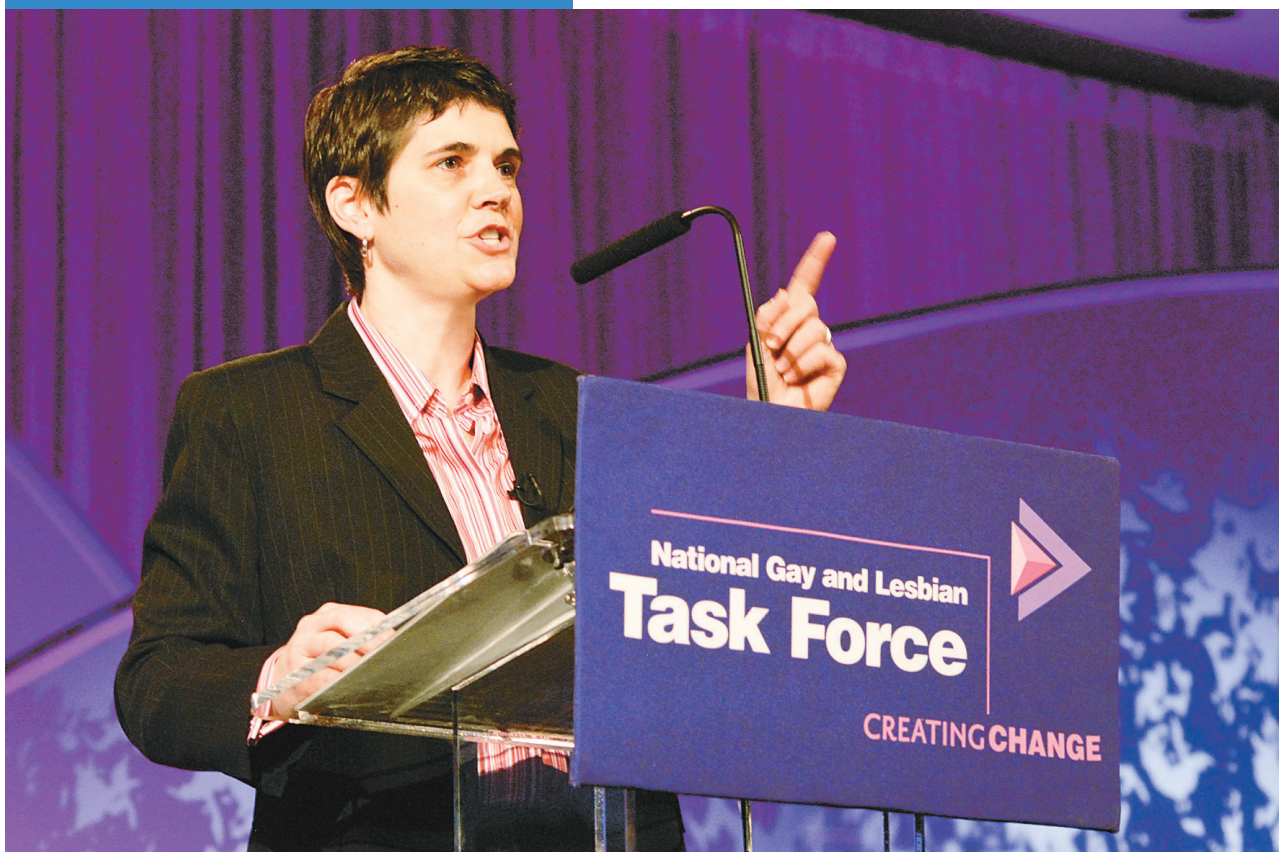
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Rea Carey. Photos Courtesy of National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

MINNEAPOLIS HOSTS NATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN TASK FORCE CREATING CHANGE CONFERENCE

More than 2,000 GLBT-rights advocates will gather in Minneapolis February 2-5 to strategize and organize for the critical year ahead. Hosting the annual Creating Change Conference is the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), whose mission is to build the grassroots power of the GLBT community by training activists, as well as through other means to be discussed and demonstrated during the gathering.

NGLTF Deputy Executive Director of External Relations and Conference Director Russell Roybal said, "Creating Change brings together a collective community of activist leaders. The most important issue to effect



Sue Hyde (left) and Russell Roybal

change is the question we all must ask ourselves: What will I do to move freedom, justice, and equality forward? Creating Change is a truly unique opportunity for people to learn skills to actually be able to move freedom, justice, and equality forward.”

Although the tragic shootings in Tucson make change seem an unreachable goal, Roybal expressed optimism: “In the LGBT community, we know all too well the result of hateful rhetoric. We have been verbally assaulted, beaten up, and killed simply for being who we are. I hope the events in Tucson help shine a light on the fact that whatever differences we may have, violence is never the answer, and that in order to grow as a society, we must be generous with one another. We also know that creating positive change is possible, because people from every part of this country are doing it every day.”

In her annual State of the Movement address at the conference, NGLTF Executive Director Rea Carey is expected to address some of these possibilities, stressing that change always has happened at the state and local level, and will continue in the com-

ing year as in the past.

NGLTF will pursue federal agency policy changes to recognize our lives and our families, and encourage elected officials to become publicly supportive of full GLBT equality. The push for greater inclusion of GLBT issues in broader progressive change work will go on, together with a stepping forward of GLBT activists on the broad range of issues that affect our lives, but that some may believe are not “GLBT issues.”

Kate Clinton, noted comedian and social commentator, will emcee all plenary sessions at the conference.

On the role of humor in these parlous times, Clinton remarked, “Now more than ever, we need to laugh—to lighten the spirit, to light the way, to make us light enough to move. As an LGBT movement, we need to laugh together to refresh and reenergize. And we also need to ridicule some seriously stupid ideas—homophobia, sexism, racism, violence—to vaporize their tenuous hold on the citizenry, so that we can truly make change. And if I can get you to blow a drink out your nose while laughing, I’ve done my job!”

Over the several days, some 30 different top-level training sessions will take place, as well as development of political and organizational skills for attendees.

Dan Hawes, Director of the NGLTF Academy for Leadership and Action, explained “At the National Conference on LGBT Equality: Creating Change, the Task Force will offer top-notch trainings known as the Academy for Leadership and Action to LGBT leaders seeking to build lasting political power. These trainings, will teach political strategy and advocacy skills that are critical for passing pro-LGBT legislation, and defeating anti-LGBT ballot initiatives, such as the threatened antimarriage referendum facing the Minnesota LGBT community. They’ll also develop skills that are vital for building thriving organizations that endure for the long term, including raising grassroots contributions, and engaging in effective strategic planning.”

In addition to the leadership training activities, Reverend Elder Nancy L. Wilson of Metropolitan Community Church, along with Bishop Yvette Flunder, Founder of City of Refuge Community Church (United

Church of Christ), will deliver the kickoff plenary speech, “Practice Spirit, Do Justice: Hard Work for Our Common Good.”

Reverend Rebecca Voelkel, NGLTF Faith Work Director, noted that “Practice Spirit, Do Justice” “is a multifaith, multiracial gathering happening within the Creating Change Conference. We will explore and strategize around the religious-secular partnerships within the pro-LGBT movement—both the pain and mistrust that often occur and the opportunities for collaboration. We will honestly examine the relationships between different spiritual and religious communities, particularly the ways in which religion has been used to oppress and destroy many cultures. And we will build upon opportunities for work across faith communities that is authentic.”

According to Sue Hyde, Conference Director, NGLTF seeks to work with local “partners in communities. The Task Force works with a range of local entities in Minneapolis-St. Paul to bring the 2011 Creating Change Conference to life. We have enjoyed great relationships with many community partners over the past 12 months, and we know that our community partners have built relationships in new ways by working with each other and with the Task Force on the 2011 Creating Change Conference. A local host committee of over 100 volunteers organizes Minnesota LGBT organizations, leaders, and groups to staff the event with onsite volunteers.”

Hyde related that these volunteers, who



Kate Clinton

shoulder numerous tasks, “ensure that all who would be interested in the event know and hear about it; staff and prepare our six hospitality suites during the conference; feature Minnesota’s LGBT projects and organizations in the conference program; coordinate worship services; organize 12-step meetings for those who want and need them; host out-of-town guests in community host housing; and ensure that the conference is accessible to disabled LGBT people and allies.

“Community foundations such as PFund Foundation, and local businesses and corporations such as General Mills, support the 2011 Creating Change conference with funding; volunteers; and support for specific aspects of our program.

Hyde continued, “Local businesses will be selling merchandise in our exhibitor/vendor area, while LGBT advocacy organizations, such as OutFront Minnesota, the Bisexual Organizing Project, and Shades of Yellow, will present at workshops, and utilize the event to better organize to meet challenges and opportunities in the coming year.

“Also included are religious and faith community organizations, such as All God’s Children Metropolitan Community Church, who support the event by inviting members



Reverend Elder Nancy L. Wilson

to donate to the host committee; organizing receptions and gatherings at the conference; and hosting exhibits in our exhibit/vendor area.”

An important teaching tool is the day-long institutes, with topics like dealing with racism today, and GLBT students and bullying (of any students, straight or gay).

Hyde pointed out, “Many years ago, we realized that 90-minute workshop sessions do not always meet the needs of our movement and our community activists. The day-long institutes cover many topics that need and deserve expanded time and attention.

“Solving vexing problems and addressing complicated issues such as racism and school/community violence and bullying requires more than one day, but we know that by annually presenting programs that take up these issues, we are making an important contribution to our movement’s capacity to recognize and resolve them.”

Hyde invited “all interested Creating Change attendees to join these important sessions with open and listening minds and constructive questions. It is the only way we will create durable and sustainable change, and build a society that accepts and welcomes all of us.”

Among the numerous speakers will be Chrystos, internationally-known poet and activist, who will address the topic “Indigenous People of the Americas.”

At the closing plenary brunch, titled “Minneapolis Loves You Better,” hip-hop/pop/soul duo God-Des & She will perform.

For events, times, and venues, as well as to register, visit <<http://creatingchange.org>>. **E.B. BOATNER**

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LOCAL

PAWLENTY SUPPORTS REINSTATING DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL

Former Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty, who is pursuing a bid for the Republican Presidential nomination, told a talk radio host in early January that if elected President, he would reinstate Don't Ask, Don't Tell. He said, "I have been a public supporter of maintaining Don't Ask, Don't Tell, and I would support reinstating it as well."

NATIONAL

GAY GROUPS CRITICIZE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT BRIEF

The US Justice Department has filed a brief defending the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). The Obama administration claims it must defend the federal law in court, even though as a presidential candidate, Barack Obama supported a full repeal of DOMA during the campaign. Equality Matters chief Richard Socarides stated in an e-mail, "There are some improvements in tone in the brief, but the bottom line is, the government continues to oppose full equality for its gay citizens."

LOG CABIN REPUBLICANS BACK IN COURT TO OVERTURN DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL

Although President Barack Obama signed legislation beginning the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Log Cabin Republicans was back in court in January, moving forward with its lawsuit against the policy. The group urged the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals to proceed with its review of the case and Judge Virginia Phillips's ruling last year that the ban on openly gay service members was unconstitutional. The plaintiff wrote in its filing, "Although a bill to repeal the Don't Ask, Don't Tell statute has been passed, and signed by the President, this legislative 'repeal' is not yet effective." The Obama administration has moved to delay further court action on the issue.

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MARYLAND SET TO EXPAND GAY RIGHTS, SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

According to CNN, Maryland is set to become the sixth state to recognize same-sex marriage, as supporters argue they have the votes to pass a bill legalizing it in the upcoming legislative session. Not only are Democrats optimistic, but also Democratic Governor Martin O'Malley has stated publicly he would sign such a bill into law.

US STATE DEPARTMENT MAKES PASSPORT FORMS GENDER-NEUTRAL

The Washington Post reports that the State Department has decided to make US passport applications gender-neutral by removing references to "mother" and "father" in favor of "parent one" and "parent two." The Human Rights Campaign applauded the announcement, calling it a "positive step forward for all American families." The antigay Family Research Council, however, complained in a statement, "This is clearly designed to advance the causes of same-sex 'marriage' and homosexual parenting without statutory authority, and violates the spirit if not the letter of the Defense of Marriage Act."

WORLD

BARCELONA GAY AND LESBIAN MONUMENT PLANS OUTLINED

Agence France-Presse reports that Barcelona is about to unveil a monument to GLBT people persecuted throughout history. According to the city, an inscription on the monument will read: "In memory of the gays, lesbians and transsexual people who have suffered persecution and repression throughout history." Homosexuality was legalized in Spain in 1970 after the death of dictator Francisco Franco.

UGANDA COURT BANS GAY OUTING

Uganda's high court has ruled that the country's media outlets cannot out people as gay. Being gay is still illegal in Uganda, but the court ruled against a newspaper that launched a campaign in October to out a series of alleged gay men. The judge in the case said, "Clearly, the call to hang gays in dozens tends to tremendously threaten their right to human dignity." **WRITTEN & COMPILED BY BRADLEY TRAYNOR**

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Remembering Krissy Bates

Whenver our community achieves a first of some kind, it's typically cause for celebration. But when transgender woman Krissy Bates recently was found brutally murdered in her Downtown Minneapolis apartment, becoming the city's first homicide victim of 2011, all we as a community could do was mourn.

What we know from news accounts of her story is that Bates, 45, was new to Minneapolis. She lived a relatively quiet life on the edge of Downtown in an old brownstone on Linden Avenue. Her neighbors said she was a warm and caring person. One neighbor even seemed to keep an eye out for her.

On January 12, the building caretaker was asked to check on Bates. Entering her apartment, he found her dead from what the Hennepin County Medical Examiner said was the result of "complex homicidal violence," likely indicating more than one cause of death.

The Minneapolis Police Department announced on January 19 that it had arrested Bates's boyfriend, 40-year-old Arnold Darwin Waukazo, in connection with the murder.

We aren't certain of the motives surrounding Bates's murder, but we do know that transgender people are at greater risk for violence and ultimately murder.

In 2010, the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs released its *Report of Hate Violence Against LGBTQ Communities* for 2009. It found that in 2009, murders against our community were at their second-highest rate in a decade. Nationally, at least 22 people were the victims of hate murder. Most were transgender women.

And those are only the reported cases. Fear of reporting, along with misreporting, mean the actual numbers likely are even greater.

Antitransgender violence, even if it

doesn't result in death, is on the rise, both nationally and in Minnesota.

According to OutFront Minnesota Anti-Violence Program Director Rebecca Waggoner, 2009 saw "a 38 percent increase in cases specifically targeting transgender communities here in Minnesota."

That figure jumps to 64 percent when bias crimes across the entire LGBTQ community in Minnesota are included.

International Transgender Day of Remembrance, held each year on November 20, raises awareness and honors the lives of transgender people murdered because of antitransgender hatred. A list of transgender murder victims going all the way back to 1970 is maintained.

This endless chronicle of hapless victims and the gruesome descriptions of their horrific deaths is stunning in its scope. In 1976, Nikki was thrown off a New York City roof to her death. In 1984, Chiron Collins was stabbed 42 times. In 1987, Michelle Byrne was tortured, beaten to death, and beheaded.

One striking thing about this tragically-exhaustive list is how few of the grisly murders have been solved, with a killer ultimately brought to justice.

Beyond honoring Bates's life, it behooves us as a community to raising awareness of transgender violence. Like so many in our community, transgender persons often have few if anyone to advocate on their behalf or in their memory.

Vigils and days of remembrance are important to help us heal and strengthen our community, but they do not deter perpetrators from committing these crimes in the first place.

Let's honor Bates's memory with action and resources to ensure that our transgender brothers and sisters are safe and healthy, able to live proud, productive lives. **BRADLEY TRAYNOR**

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LAVENDER'S FIRST Thursdays

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When: Thursday, February 3

Time: 5:30 - 8:00 PM

Cost: FREE

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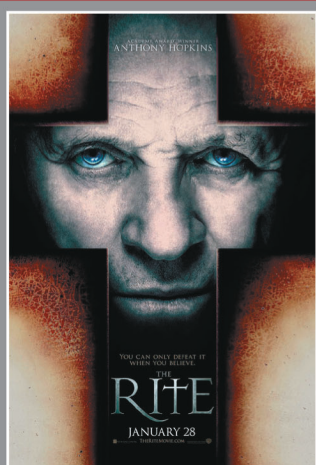
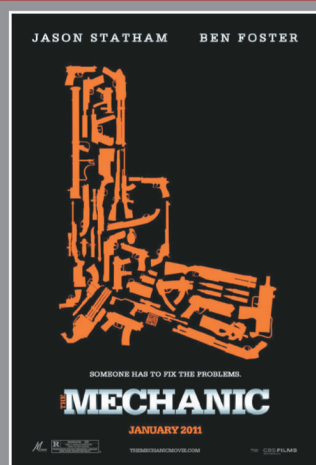
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The Odyssey. Photo by Petronella Ytsma

The Odyssey • **Through Feb. 6** • Park Square Theatre • 20 W. 7th Pl., St. Paul • (651) 295-7001 • www.parksquaretheatre.org

Playwright William Randall Beard has adapted Homer's Ancient Greek epic with an eye to star quality. This production glistens with some of the finest local actors, including some who have been named among *Lavender's* annual Best and Outstanding Performances of the Year in past years: Cathleen Fuller, Robert Gardner, Shawn Hamilton, Emil Herrera, Jodi Kellogg, and Nora Montanez. Two actors beloved for their work in GLBT-themed theater also appear: Sasha Andreev and Dale Pfeilsticker. Richard Cook directs, with set design by Joel Sass.

Shrek The Musical
Feb. 1-6

Orpheum Theatre
910 Hennepin Ave., Mpls.
(800) 982-2787
www.hennepintheatretrust.org

Whoa: Hold your donkeys! Before you even think of writing off this spectacular musical based on a hit kids film, check out who are behind it: David Lindsay-Abaire, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright of *Rabbit Hole* (now a terrific John Cameron Mitchell film); and Jeanine Tesori, the composer who gave us *Caroline, or Change*, the musical that ruled the Guthrie's 2009 roost. Jason Moore, who staged Broadway's *Avenue Q*, is the director. *Shrek The Musical* became a reality because stage and film

director Sam Mendes (*American Beauty*) was so smitten with the original film, he suggested it to DreamWorks Animation's Jeffrey Katzenberg. Neal Street Productions, Ltd., of which Mendes is a major partner, has produced the show with DreamWorks Theatricals.

Cohesion
Feb. 11-12

Form + Content Gallery
210 N. 2nd St., Mpls.
(612) 436-1151
www.formandcontent.org

This wrenchingly-beautiful piece on homophobia in the US military was one of 2010's most luminous performances. Remounted

by its original solo dancer, Justin Leaf, for Form + Content's *Wee Cabaret* series, it has been choreographed once again by John Kelly. Gay identity and selfhood movingly are revealed when the military trappings thrust upon a soldier ultimately are cast off. Leaf and Kelly's collaborative rehearsal period transpired mostly at New York City's Park Avenue Armory, where a National Guard regiment recently returned from a tour of Iraq.

Fences
Feb. 9-12

Whitney Fine Arts Center
Minnesota Community and Technical College



Cohesion. Photo by Paul Virtucio

1424 Yale Pl., Mpls.
(612) 659-6118
www.minneapolis.edu

Celebrate Black History Month with what some call The Great African-American Play. 1987's Pulitzer- and Tony-winner crosses the racial divide with universal insights on parental inflexibility. Payton Woodson plays Troy Maxson, arguably the most coveted male role in African-American drama. Antonio Banks plays his son, Cory. Penumbra Theatre Company member Kevin West directs.

Producer Michael Robertson, who saw the original Broadway production, says, "I was overwhelmed, and wept several times watching it, as the power of the father-and-son relationship related to my own issues with my father in Iowa."

Penner Vs. The Hydra
Feb. 4-12

Cedar Riverside People's Center
425 20th Ave. S., Mpls.
(952) 926-6728
www.maximumverbosityonline.org

Phillip Andrew Low, who wrote last year's splendid Minnesota Fringe hit comedy *A Nice Guy's Guide to Awkward Sex*, is quite savvy about matters sexual.

Low relates about his newest work, "The primary action of



Penner Vs. *The Hydra*. Photo by Caitlin Sheaffer

the play revolves around a heterosexual polyamorist named Penner, played by myself, struggling to create a legal definition of love. Much of the comedy emerges from the absurdity of trying to create such a definition at all, let alone attempting to legislate and enforce it. While the play doesn't contain a portrait of homosexual relationships per se, the parallels to the gay-marriage debate are clear, and actually explicitly drawn by several characters. A police officer laments 'the loss of simplicity,' and one of the monster characters mentions the Matthew Shepard killing."

Tara King of genderbending dance trio Mad King Thomas choreographs comic numbers interspersed throughout.

Vampire Lesbians of Sodom

Feb. 11-26

Lowry Lab

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(612) 991-8729

www.brazentheatre.org

Brazen Theatre is doing the local GLBT community a great service by reviving plays of one the great gay camp comedy playwrights of recent years: Charles Busch. Though it's wonderful that more mainstream theaters are producing GLBT work as a matter of course, Brazen, under Mark Hooker's artistic direction, has cultivated a distinct style matched with an expert grasp of camp and crossgender acting that benefits from an intense focus on our camp tradition. The upcoming late-night run of those diabolical diva dykes with fangs promises to be a delightful dive into Busch for those who know his work—or not. Busch's own first novel, *Whores of Lost Atlantis*, influenced *Vampire Lesbians of Sodom*. The original production was at the Limbo Lounge in New York City's East Village in 1984, and went on to play the Provincetown Playhouse for five years. It's a cult classic, to be sure. ■



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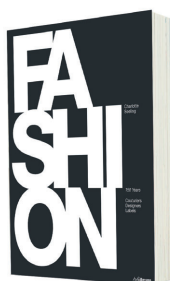


The Businessman: A Tale of Terror
The M.D.: A Horror Story
The Priest: A Gothic Romance
The Sub: A Study in Witchcraft

THOMAS M. DISCH

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS • \$16.95 EACH

Hugo Award-winner and prolific-science-fiction-writer Thomas M. Disch (1940-2008) lived as a teen for several years in Minnesota, which together with his Catholic schooling gave him fodder for these remarkable novels. Rereleased now by the University of Minnesota Press, these four volumes of "Supernatural Minnesota" meld humor, horror, wickedness, and the supernatural with Disch's finely-crafted prose and masterful storytelling skills. *The Businessman*, in the person of the repellant Bob Glandier, kills his estranged wife—who returns to haunt him with her dead mother and the ghost of poet John Berryman. In *The M.D.*, the god Mercury gives young Billy a caduceus, and the power to cure or kill. *The Priest* opens with a Minneapolis priest, Father Patrick Bryce, a "rehabilitated" pedophile, being tattooed with the devil's face—enter blackmail, past lives, sorcery, evil, and the darkest of dark humor. *The Sub*'s disturbed Diana Turney is a portal for shape-changing, cruelty, and murder.

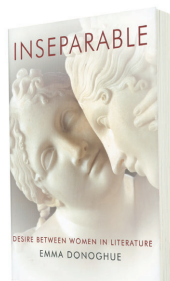


Fashion: 150 Years, Couturiers, Designers, Labels

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You needn't be a fashionista to become engrossed in this marvelous chronicle of fashion trends and fabulous designers. Its 500-some glossy pages beautifully are illustrated with 1,000 images—in black-and-white and color—capturing the sublime and the ridiculous, depending on your tastes. Seeling takes the mesmerized reader from voluptuous models of the late-19th-Century through the twig-thin sylphs of modern time. And the designers...it takes a volume this massive to contain the gargantuan egos and personalities of the likes of Paul Poiret, "The First Designer" (1879-1944); Coco Chanel (1883-1971); Elsa Schiaparelli, of the monkey fur shoes (1890-1973); and Gilbert Adrian (1903-1959), who as simply "Adrian" draped the likes of Joan Crawford, Greta Garbo, and Jean Harlow. Modern personalities include the late "bad boy" Alexander McQueen (1969-2010), as well as "The Philosopher," Hussein Chalayan, a Cypriot transplanted to London.



Inseparable: Desire Between Women in Literature

EMMA DONOGHUE

ALFRED A. KNOPF • \$27.95

Donoghue has done an immense amount of literary spadework to spare you and me the effort, so that we may peruse the myriad of titles she has unearthed. With the bibliography organized chronologically, her material is readily available to all readers. Herself a novelist, playwright, and literary critic, she has perused "scores of studies" as well as original sources to explore same-sex love and female bonding in general (i.e., not necessarily what one normally would call "lesbian"). By this same token, Donoghue includes *Jane Eyre*, the "founding text of the tradition" of institutionalized or isolated girls and young women thrown together sans male contact to discover the love of other women. She examines Shakespeare's crossdressing Rosalind and Viola, providing frissons as young men played young women disguised as young men. Finally, "Monsters" are defined as those "heroines" of tales in which "a wicked woman tries to seduce and destroy an innocent one," providing frissons of their own.



Yoga for Every Room in Your House

JINJER STANTON

GREAT BEAR PRESS • \$14.95

Baby, it's cold outside, but you don't have to trek to the gym or a class to practice and benefit from yoga right in your home—in every room. A yoga teacher for more than 12 years, local author Jinjer Stanton has found hatha yoga to be a powerful tool for imparting wellness to both mind and body. She shows readers how ordinary household furniture and objects—which one might expect to have to clear away to create a studio space—instead can become aids and props for the exercises themselves. After going over the basics of proper breathing, mindful movement, and power of the mind, she opens bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, and office for the practitioner—with succinct instructions and playful illustrations. For the novice, Stanton supplies the chapter "Hindu/Yoga Scriptural History," touching on the Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad-Gita, as well as yoga's "Eightfold Path" that includes ethical principles, control of the senses, concentration, and union with the divine. Visit <www.jinjerstanton.com>.

SHIRLEY VALENTINE
by Willy Russell

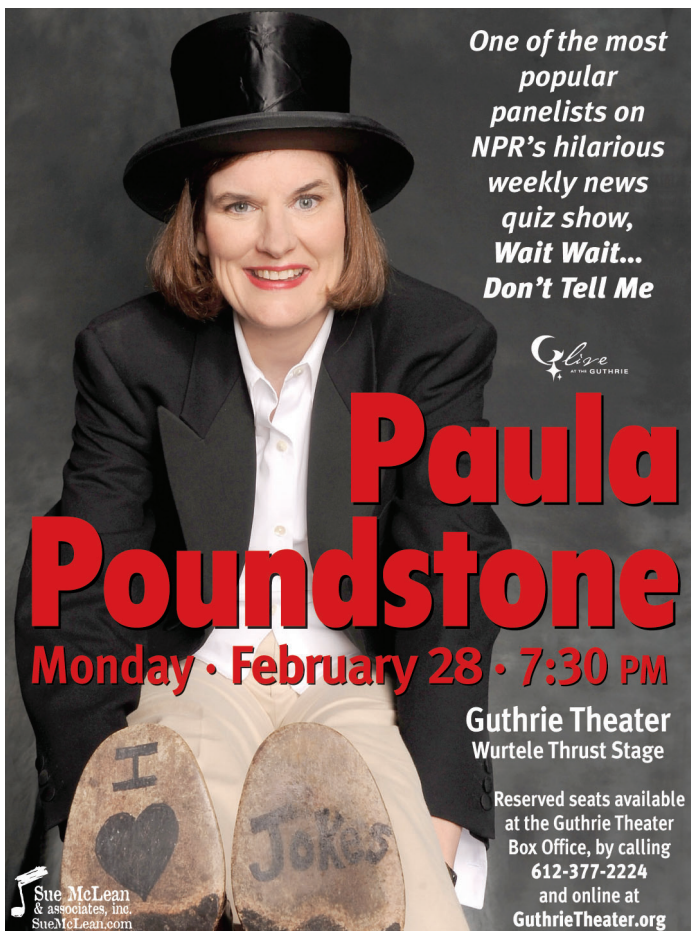


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19 BAR

January 19

Photos by George Holdgrafer





Ryan
Photo by Paul Nixdorf

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BAR CALENDAR

For club addresses, phone numbers, and websites, see "Bar Advertiser Guide" on page 38. For events not at bars, see <LavenderMagazine.com/calendar>.



FRIDAY, JANUARY 28

Gary Collins
5 PM. Tickle.
Mia Dorr
9 PM. Tickle.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29

Imperial Court of Minnerota Show
Benefits Creating Change Conference
Local Host Committee
5 PM. Gay 90's.
Mia Dorr
9 PM. Tickle.
Elegance
9 PM. Town House.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 4

The Black Guard
Black Frost Run
<www.blackguardmpls.com>

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5

Lip Service
9 PM. Town House.
Babylon
The Main Club. Superior, WI.
The Black Guard
Black Frost Run
<www.blackguardmpls.com>

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 6

The Black Guard
Black Frost Run
<www.blackguardmpls.com>

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11

YOLO
9 PM. Town House.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12

TNT Show
9 PM. Town House. ■

IMPERIAL START TO THE NEW YEAR Imperial Court of Minnesota Benefit for The Trevor Project

January 16

Gay 90's Dance Annex

Host Burndate Daniels (AKA Dan Lucas, Emperor XII), right, and emcee Ravonna Belladonna. Photo by Steve Miller





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I'm guessing its patronage is because of several reasons: **Not only are the portion sizes tremendous,** but also, in all honesty, no one can make a sandwich like a Jewish deli.

MORT'S DELICATESSEN

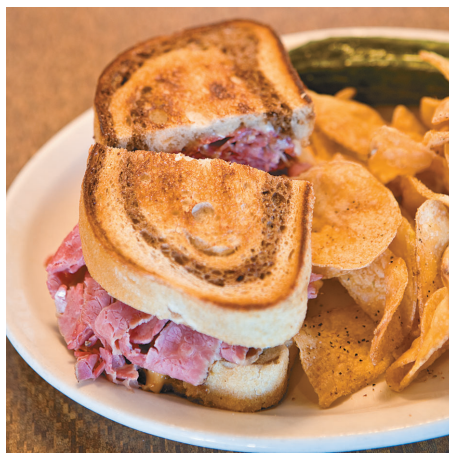
FORMER GAY 90'S OWNER MIKE BLOOM AND FAMILY OFFER TRADITIONAL JEWISH FAVORITES

I had heard rumors about a new—well, newish—Jewish deli that opened in Golden Valley, but no matter how many times I listened to the gossip, no one seemed to remember its name. What a mitzvah it was when *Lavender* finally introduced me to Mort's!

At Highway 55 and Winnetka Avenue, this deli is smack-dab in the middle of strip mall central, but word of mouth nevertheless has spread far and wide about this made-from-scratch place. In fact, its regulars include the Minnesota Vikings and the Timberwolves. I'm guessing its patronage is because of several reasons: Not only are the portion sizes tremendous, but also, in all honesty, no one can make a sandwich like a Jewish deli.

The pastrami is so moist, it's like butter. The same goes for the corned beef. Both are piled so high, the sandwich easily reaches from bottom lip to eyes, but somehow with one like that, you find a way to cram it in there.

At one point, my dining companion teased me that I had mayo all over my face, and I had to laugh—she looked ➡



(Left) Cheesecake. (Right) Mort's Reuben.

Mort's serves traditional Jewish favorites, but it has adapted them to Midwestern taste.

a bit like the post-Sinai Moses herself.

Mort's serves traditional Jewish favorites, but it has adapted them to Midwestern taste. In New York, if you were to ask for bacon on your corned beef sandwich, you might be sent to the back of the line—if you're *lucky*. But here in the Twin Cities metro, bacon is ordered. Just what kind of a mashuga putz

would go to a Jewish deli and ask for bacon is beyond me, but apparently, it happens.

At Mort's, you can have bacon on a burger, as well as one specialty sandwich, Mike's Kentucky Hot Brown (\$11.99), which is topped with it, along with Parmesan cheese sauce, rotisserie turkey, and grilled tomatoes.

If you go to Mort's, do *not* ask for a side of

ranch dressing to dip your sandwich in. Yes, the deli has it. But just...don't.

I'm getting ahead of myself—righteous indignation will do that to a person. We actually started with The One Pound Knish (\$4.49 half/\$6.49 whole). Knish is a stuffed pastry—in this case, creamy mashed potato is the stuffing. Not exactly diet food, but Jewish food seldom is. Mild and comforting, it sticks to the ribs. We also had Potato Latkes, served with sour cream and applesauce (\$5.99). Astonishingly light, and not at all greasy, they are the best I ever have had.

If this is your first foray into Jewish cuisine, your visit to Mort's is not complete without either Jesse's Favorite Matzo Ball Soup (\$3.50 cup/\$8.99 bowl) or Ike's Hot Cabbage Beef Borscht (\$3.50 cup /\$8.99 bowl). The cup is more like a bowl, whereas the bowl is more like a tureen.

Growing up in Brooklyn, my father always hated when he had to eat borscht—the beet broth's color can be a little alarming when you're little. But I never have understood the issue with borscht, as it's really good—kind of sweet-and-sour, and earthy.

The hearty matzo ball soup was simi- ➔




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CUISINE ♦ OFF THE EATEN PATH

lar to my own, and like some of my readers, I'm quite fussy about my balls. The ones at Mort's are generous, with some density to them in the middle, but nice and soft towards the edges. It's a simple matter, but important. If you ever come across stingy or overcooked balls, you'll know what I mean.

We tried a few other sandwiches besides the Hot Brown.

The Shepard (\$13.99) consists of sky-high layers of corned beef and pastrami with Swiss, plus heaps of coleslaw between two slabs of soft rye bread. I'd come back and get my Moses mayo beard anytime to have that taste again.

We passed over the traditional Reuben to try Mort's experimental version (\$13.59), with grilled corned beef, white horseradish cheese, Russian dressing, and sauerkraut on rye bread. One usually doesn't mess with a Reuben, but I enjoyed the tweak. The Russian dressing added a different sweetness that was very nice with the sauerkraut.

On to dessert. If you haven't had a good New York-style cheesecake, you either should order a slice (\$7.99)—warning, it easily will feed three or four people—or buy a whole one from the deli to take home with you. Mort's gets its cheesecake shipped from the famous Carnegie Deli in New York for a reason—none is better. It's dense, but melts in your mouth. The top is perfectly golden brown, with no crack in sight. It's served with a very-sweet, very-dominant strawberry or blueberry topping, perhaps to cutie it up for Midwesterners. But I believe it's much better left as its tangy, sassy, New York-style self.

And for God's sake, hold the ranch dressing, or so help me...! **HEIDI FELLNER**

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(Above) Dessert case. (Below) Matzo Ball Soup.

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THE BLACK HILLS

The Black Hills in South Dakota are part of a very ancient Earth—their geological core has been dated to around 1.8 billion years old. By contrast, the Himalayas are only about 10 million years old—mere babies, really.

While I'm sure the Himalayas are inspiring in their own daunting way, the Black Hills have an air about them that always has fascinated me. In certain places, people instinctively seem to hush their voices, and lose themselves in these old, old woods.

If you never have been there before, tourist-friendly destinations like Mount Rushmore, Custer State Park, Wind Cave, Crazy Horse Monument, and the Badlands definitely should be on your agenda. But if you only have seen Western South Dakota in brochure highlights, it's time you went again.

The Black Hills are a veritable hiker's paradise, offering approximately 450 miles of trail systems. Centennial Trail alone is 111

miles long, running from Bear Butte (the sacred mountain of the Sioux tribes) to Wind Cave National Park.

“Unofficial” trails exist as well, such as the path locals have cut to a uniquely-formed natural waterslide and wading spot known as Devil’s Bathtub, off Highway 14 and Cleopatra Road.

In Spearfish Canyon, the rugged ’76 Trail is particularly scenic, tracing Potato Creek Johnny’s route from two primary gold mines to his sales point at Latchstring Inn. It’s a steep climb up, with no easy way down, but the summit offers amazing views of the canyon below.

An easier hike just across the road leads to Roughlock Falls. This gentler, manicured trail has been redesigned entirely in order to preserve the falls area. Along the trail, you can find evidence of resident beavers and other wildlife, but on a beautiful, sunny weekend, it’s full of families and their ecstatic dogs. If you haven’t been to this area before, you still may recognize it from the last few, very-picturesque scenes of *Dances With Wolves*. Its star, Kevin Costner, so fell in love with the Black Hills that he bought a casino in nearby Deadwood.

Limited-stakes gambling in Deadwood was legalized back in 1989, about nine years after the last operating brothel was closed. Gambling has changed the appearance of the town, but perhaps it is more accurate to say gambling has renovated the town, brick and spirit, to what it always was. I never have been a big gambler, but many tourists are gamblers. That has led to the restoration of the once-crumbling Victorian buildings to their former glory, give or take a flashing slot machine light or two.

In the spirit of the Wild West, you may smoke and drink while you gamble. Beer and wine are free while you play, served by costumed Wild West saloon gals.

Apart from the casinos, impulse shopping is excellent if you’re in the market for Black Hills gold or silver; leatherwear and gear (biker or cowboy); or Native American handiwork.

Hill City is more sedate, but also features a historic main street and shops where you can buy anything from fine art to kitsch. It is also the starting point for the steam-powered 1880 train, which runs from Hill City to Keystone and back. The ride through the Black Hills pine forest is an exhilarating experience all by itself.

However, the train also offers special events in conjunction with the nearby Prairie Berry Winery. This establishment only has been in Hill City since 2004, but its wines are unique, and tastings are complimentary.



(Clockwise from facing page) Driving through the Black Hills; Deadwood; Bison in the Black Hills. Photos by Hubert Bonnet • Prairie Berry Winery. Photo by Heidi Fellner

It also offers an impressive gourmet lunch menu, giving even Hill City’s lunch hotspot, The Alpine Inn, a run for its money. When the weather is kind, as it often is in the Black Hills, a glass of wine with an open-faced avocado and hummus sandwich best is enjoyed on Prairie Berry’s partially-shaded patio.

The Black Hills offer so much to see and do that a central location, such as Rapid City, is especially helpful. Hotels are plentiful there, but because you just won’t find a number of attractions published in a guide, a bed-and-breakfast stay is ideal for discovering them.

Eileen Rossow, co-owner of idyllic Peregrine Pointe, explains, “That is the difference between a bed-and-breakfast and a hotel or a motel. [At the latter,] you don’t have

the proprietor sit down at breakfast with you, and tell you about things to see and events coming up. You get personal service, and that’s very important.”

Peregrine Pointe is one of the few bed-and-breakfasts in the Black Hills listed with <www.purpleroofs.com>. With five bedrooms, a spacious common area, and a sun-drenched patio, guests can enjoy a degree of privacy for the duration of their stay. For more information, visit <www.peregrinebb.com>.

It’s often hard for me to leave, because even after 15 years in the Twin Cities, my heart never really left the Black Hills. Despite everything our culture has imposed, it’s still a place of the soul, and when you’re there, you’re home. **HEIDI FELLNER**

GLBT Wedding Expo

Reprises at Park Plaza Hotel

Appropriately enough, on Valentine's Day Eve, February 13, Noon-4 PM, the seventh annual GLBT Life & Wedding Expo takes place at the Park Plaza Hotel, 4460 West 78th Street Circle, Bloomington. The event is presented by the Park Plaza Hotel, Rainbow Wedding Network, and Twin City Bride. Savii Formalwear is sponsoring tuxes; Adagio is providing music; and Smitty Boyz is doing hair and makeup.

It was at this same location in 2003 that the Rainbow Wedding Network nationwide tour of Gay and Lesbian Wedding Expos began. For seven years, the expo has remained the exclusive event in the Twin Cities dedicated to serving gay and lesbian couples wishing to plan their weddings.

Special guest is Christopher Straub, *Pro-*

ect Runway Season 6 contestant. The expo Fashion Show will feature his spring and summer line. He will offer one of his signature items for the 2011 Event Raffle.

New special guest Paris Bennett, Top-5 contestant from Season 5 of *American Idol*, is joining the festivities.

Also featured are 30 select, gay-friendly exhibitors ready to work joyfully with you and your partner; samples and planning tips; interactive presentation by Rainbow Wedding Network founders; and amazing raffle prizes, including your chance to win a four-night stay in Aruba and signature luggage by Straub.

GLBT couples, as well as advocates and allies, are encouraged to attend this wonderful event to show support, and take advan-



tage of all the fun and helpful resources the afternoon has to offer.

Tickets, \$10 per person, are available at <SameLoveSameRights.com>. All proceeds will be donated to District 202.

For more information on this event, including past photos, visit <<http://glbt-expo.com>>.

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Photos by Sophia Hantzes



Walking on Ice

Where I come from, a pop is something you get on your ass—not something you order at a restaurant. This and other lessons mark a boy from the South transplanted to the Midwest.

Exhibit A: my first date in Minneapolis.

I wanted so desperately to impress him. I'd met him only once before, but he was handsome, intelligent, *and* sweet. Prince Charming, at last!

I spray on some cologne—my best—and out the door I go. I spot him waiting for me in a pickup truck. He rolls down his window, and calls, “Over here, sexy!”

I blush—and, as I'm making my way down the sidewalk, I bust my ass. Hard. In front of my building, in front of Mr. Charming, my foot finds a sliver of ice, and off my balance I go.

It takes a moment to register I've fallen. I sit up. My jeans convey every grain of the cold concrete beneath. I don't care. I think of nothing else but running back to my apartment, and never showing my face in Minneapolis again.

Before I escape, he's at my side. “*Awwww*,” he says, as he helps me to my feet like I'm a handicapped puppy dog. Of course, I slip getting up, and nearly pull him down with me. *We're off to a fabulous start.*

On the way to dinner, I learn that the cold on my ass isn't just cold. It's snow. (*Aside: If you want to know embarrassment, let a puddle of water accumulate under you on the passenger seat of Prince Charming's car.*) He isn't mad, though. He lets me clean up my puddle with the towel he keeps for his dog in the back seat. Cringe.

At dinner, determined I'm not going to make any unnecessary mistakes driven by alcohol (I can do that all by myself), I order a Diet Coke, he orders beer, and our server recaps: “All right, one pop and a Miller Light.”



My face goes blank. Where I come from, a “pop” is something you get when you misbehave. It's a slap on your ass, just shy of a full-fledged spanking. Of course, on date night, seemingly-trivial knowledge like “*pop*” also means “*soda*” becomes paramount—and, for me, goes out the door. Mr. Doesn't Slip on Ice notes my confusion, and laughs.

I flush red with embarrassment, and I look down.

*Unf***ing-believable, Justin, I scold myself. He thinks you're a complete klutz; he thinks you're ridiculously oblivious; he thinks you're an idiot; oh, and he probably thinks you're insecure.*

This will be the last time I see him, I decide—or any public place in Minneapolis. I'm trapped in an episode of *Seinfeld*, and I suddenly feel empathy for George.

“Hey,” my date pulls back my attention. I look at him without raising my head.

“I like your accent,” he says.

His eyes are honest. Damn eyes.

He smiles at me in a way that erases my self-consciousness, and I realize he doesn't find my quirks amusing. He finds them *endearing*.

The rest of our date is perfect. We talk about growing up in dysfunction, about other cultural differences I might find, about how nervous we both were for the evening. He makes me feel as if I've known him forever.

When we get home, he walks me to my door, advising I may otherwise injure myself—and under the street lamp in that frigid air, he wraps his arms around me, and he kisses me.

It's one of those moments that takes 10 seconds, but lasts forever.

Things didn't work out with him, but this is how I think of Minnesota, through the lens of this memory: standing in the snow, a boy from the South yet to find friends, all my insecurities on display, in the embrace of a charming, wonderfully-real person.

A year later, I'm still learning to walk on ice—but I've since made lifelong friends, memories on lakeside summer nights, and some unforgettable first dates.

My friends from home often call me on winter nights to remind me of the weather I'm missing. They regale me with memories I'm not a part of. They try eagerly to make me jealous—but their efforts always fall flat, because they haven't experienced Minnesota as we do.

Minnesota is a place that has it all without acting like it. It's a fusion of beauty, truth, humility, and tolerance—the opportunities here to be oneself are rarely more plentiful or so authentic—and if learning to walk on ice is what I have to do to stay, count me in.

I love it here, and I've never looked back.

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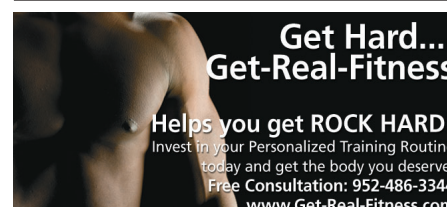
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CALENDAR

JANUARY/FEBRUARY

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Saturday, January

OUTFRONT MINNESOTA BENEFIT FOR STRONG TRANSGENDER ADVOCACY IN MINNESOTA. Join OutFront Minnesota, along with hosts SaberLee DeMare, Miranda Foslien, Andrea Jenkins, Rhys Preston DC, and Barbara Satin. Special guest is Shannon Minter, Legal Director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and lead counsel for the case that established marriage equality in California prior to the passage of Proposition 8. 5:30-7 PM. Town House, 1415 University Ave. W., St. Paul. <www.outfront.org>.

4TH ANNUAL "GET TO KNOW THE MPO"

It's hosted by the Minnesota Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO). What's the best thing about this event? Superfun? Great chamber music performed by MPO players? Delicious cakes? Silent auction? Free? All of the above! Hang out in a casual atmosphere, do some shopping and eating, and partake in the fun. 7-10 PM. Intermedia Arts, 2822 Lyndale Ave. S., Mpls. (612) 656-5676. <www.mnphil.org>.

1

Tuesday, February

SHREK THE MUSICAL. DreamWorks Theatricals and Neal Street Productions, Ltd. present *Shrek The Musical*, with book and lyrics by David Lindsay-Abaire, and music by Jeanine Tesori, directed by Jason Moore and Rob Ashford, Through Feb. 6. Orpheum Theatre, 910 Hennepin Ave., Mpls. Purchase tickets in person at State Theatre Box Office, 805 Hennepin Ave., Mpls.; online at <www.hennepintheatretrust.org>; or through Ticketmaster at 1-800-982-2787.

4

Friday, February



Shirley Valentine. Photo by Donna Kelly

SHIRLEY VALENTINE. At the age of 42, Shirley Valentine's marriage and life are in a rut. Her world is one of kitchens, cooking, and faded dreams. She longs to "drink a glass of wine in the country where grapes are grown," so when a friend invites her on holiday to Greece, she packs her bag without a second thought, ditching the drudgery of housework in hopes of adventure and love. Bain Boehlke directs Cheryl Willis, who hails from Liverpool, England, in the title role. This award-winning, one-woman show is a witty, heartfelt comedy about breaking free, living life, and starting over. Thorough Mar. 20. Jungle Theater, 2951 Lyndale Ave. S., Mpls. (612) 822-7063. <www.jungletheater.com>.

9

Wednesday, February

AIDS Action Day. Join HIV advocates, as they take over the State Capitol to increase visibility about HIV, meet with legislators, and rally in the State Capitol Rotunda. Minnesota AIDS Project Public Policy Depart-

ment will schedule meetings, and provide attendees with issues and advocacy training. Minnesota is facing a \$6.2 billion dollar deficit in 2011. Your voice is needed more than ever. Your personal stories make the difference when it comes to protecting funds for HIV prevention and services. 9 AM-3 PM. Minnesota State Capitol, St. Paul, MN. Register at <www.mn aidsproject.org/public-policy/be-an-advocate/aids-action-day.php>.

10

Thursday, February

BILL W. & DR. BOB. This play is a remarkable and humorous story set around the lives—and, more importantly, the friendship—of Bill Wilson (Phil Callen) and Dr. Bob Smith (Terry Hempleman). Bill, a down-and-out stockbroker, and Bob, a surgeon from Ohio, were both alcoholics who, through a surprising series of events, met, and formed the world-changing friendship responsible for the creation of Alcoholics Anonymous. A universal story of the dangers of isolation, and the healing powers of good connections, the play returns with its original cast for its second run at Illusion Theater. Through Mar. 13. Illusion Theater, 528 Hennepin Ave., Mpls. (612) 339-4944. <www.illusiontheater.org>.

ONGOING

BRETT FAYRE'S CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR II: THE SECOND COMING. Break from the family fumbles of the holiday season, and cheer as the all-star holiday lineup takes the field for Brett Favre's *Christmas Spectacular II: The Second Coming*. Brave New Workshop spike the holiday season with seasonal favorites, plus all-new sketches and songs, to leave audiences laughing through the New Year. Through Jan. 29. Brave New Workshop, 2605 Hennepin Ave. S., Mpls. (612) 332-6620. <www.bravenewworkshop.com>.

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In the Woolworth's store in McCarthy, Texas, the Disciples of James Dean are gathering for their 20th reunion. They were teenagers when movie star Dean filmed *Gi-*

ant in a nearby town, and their memories intermingle with flashbacks to that eventful time. This year, though, their reunion attracts a mystery guest. It's a comedy of Southern sass and spice, and emotional surprises, directed by David Coral. Through Jan. 30. Theater in the Round Players, 245 Cedar Ave., Mpls. (612) 333-3010. <www.theatreintheround.org>.

The Odyssey. In Park Square Theatre's world-premiere commission of *The Odyssey*, Minneapolis Playwright William Randall Beard reimagines Homer's epic not just as Odysseus' adventure, but as a family saga. Legendary warrior Odysseus (J.C. Cutler) battles beasts, tides, and his own arrogance—often with no weapon except his passion. His wife, Penelope (Jodi Kellogg), fights the urge to give up on the world. His son, Telemachus (Sasha Andreev), wrestles with his transition to adulthood. Reunited, they discover they can claim new lives, despite the sometimes-wicked blows of the gods. Through Feb. 6. Park Square Theatre, 20 W. 7th Pl., St. Paul. (651) 651-2291-7005 <www.parksquaretheatre.org>.

TRETTER COLLECTION 10TH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBIT. Celebrating the 10th anniversary of the internationally-acclaimed Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies at the University of Minnesota, an exhibit, *Saving Our Lives*, runs through February 5. University of Minnesota, Elmer L. Andersen Library. <<http://z.umn.edu/tretterevents>>.

TRICK HORIZONS: New Work by David Whannel. Influenced by the ordinary, surreal aspects of everyday objects, maximalist artist Whannel will use just about anything in his paintings and drawings to add interest and layers. Push and pull, inside out, jets streaming off the edge, little safe areas, bold colors, texture, funny stuff, vibrating edges, distorted perspective—with collage create a truly unique experience in each picture. Whannel doesn't consider himself an abstract artist, rather he's a fan of art. He believes there are no mistakes, just opportunity to improve and to further an image. This causes most pictures to be layered heavily with paper, objects, and paint. In fact, he considers white glue and scissors as his most valuable tools. What ends up being "behind" becomes just as important to the finished product as the foreground. When complete, a picture should be a total experience for all the senses. Through Jan. 30. Rosalux Gallery, 1224 2nd St. NE, Mpls. (612) 703-5785. <www.rosaluxgallery.com>.

For additional calendar events, visit <www.LavenderMagazine.com>.

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OWN This Year

Happy New Year, peeps! This will be a *very exciting year*, because, as you all know, it will be the final year of *The Oprah Show*. And, just like Oprah, I'm planning on some big changes, too.

No, I will not be ending this column, though I really should. But I will continue to plod on, telling you ridiculous, poorly-written tales of lesbian life, until (1) I find a rich patron who is willing to pay me millions for penning witty Facebook posts; or (2) I'm fired. So, you're stuck with me. Sorry.

What will the big changes be? Oh, who the hell knows? But they'll be big, I tell ya. Big! For example, I'm considering getting bangs, if my hair stylist will allow it.

But enough about me. Let's get back to Oprah. Yesterday, while taking down the Christmas tree, my girlfriend and I tuned into the new Oprah Winfrey Network—charmingly-acronymed OWN, as if we needed it spelled out that Oprah owns the world—because we were curious about how bad it possibly could be. So, readers, I was stunned to discover that I loved it.

How could I not? Disgraced Duchess of York takes a spiritual journey—and invites us along for the ride. Tatum and Ryan O'Neal have their own reality show. Dr. Phil, who is either incredibly jaundiced, or has no self-control when it comes to the spray-tan bottle, is floating his big orange face into everyone's shows like a rogue Macy's Thanksgiving Day balloon cut from its moorings.

I've watched very little Oprah over the past 25 years. I lost interest when she got all high-minded, and gave up the fun shows with salacious topics.

I really don't care about being the "best Jennifer that I can be." Most days, I can get by with being the "high-functioning-but-deeply-dysfunctional Jennifer"—or, my favorite version, "manic, fully-caFFEinated Jennifer, who works incredibly hard at meaningless



projects until she crashes from a sugar high, and naps for two hours."

But I'm not here to bash Oprah. I always have liked her. I admire her sass and her vast empire. I love that she takes herself so seriously.

Also endearing is that she speaks in that weird accent somewhere between imperious and bored—as if she can't wait to get through a stupid, mind-numbing interview, so she can escape to her dressing room, and have a snack. I know exactly how she feels, because I can't have a conversation these days without yearning for it to end, so I can free my mouth for food.

It's impossible to live in the Midwest, and avoid Oprah. Everyone I know has an Oprah story. Most involve encountering her in an elevator or at a party, and the lengths she will go to avoid eye contact.

The stories always start out exciting—"You'll never guess who I ran into today at (fill

in the blank)"—and end with Oprah artfully ignoring the presence of the storyteller.

I have my own Oprah story, but I'll save it for another time, because it's both unusual (she smiled *and* nodded at me!) and funny (it involves a brief encounter between our dogs—and her delight and outrage when one of my dogs unceremoniously lifted his leg, and peed on her dog's head).

I have started writing my second novel, *The Missing Bra*, which follows my first novel, *Dateland*. The first is award-winning—but not an Oprah Book Club selection, so, therefore, it amounts to a terrible failure. Even so, it's still available on Amazon. Please buy it! I look forward to offering you snippets of the new book in the coming year.

I wish you all great success, love, and spiritual journeys worthy of the former Duchess of York. I hope that everyone has an excellent 2011—and that no one pees on your head. **JENNIFER PARELLO**

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The time had come to make the move. I had resided at the corner of Grant Street and Nicollet Avenue, Apartment 302, since September 1994. In early January, the possibility of moving to Apartment 305, the original model at The Loring, became very real.

The Loring has always been on the cutting edge of efficiency living. While most builders constructed rows of identical one-room boxes, this building offered its residents several floor plans. In 1994, I selected the Versailles Plan, a homey rectangle with room for a window.

At the time, I was not in the position to indulge myself with any of the custom upgrades. I saw the apartment as simply a Bohemian backdrop for a life of ascent. That viewpoint would change, however, as the climb leveled off immediately after a successful series of cathartic wails in 1999.

Since then, I have quietly envied the occupant of Apartment 305, Bo Polanski. He grabbed that unit as soon as it became available, and wasted no time implementing the “designer package,” which included a closet, window, and second electrical outlet.

For the past 16 years, a day hasn’t gone by that Bo hasn’t flaunted his exalted status within the complex. I’ve constantly been put in the awkward position of having to say, “I’m sorry, Bo, I can’t put that in my closet, because, unlike you, I do not have one.”

This is why, when word surfaced that Bo was moving, and 305 was available, it was time to act. I put in a call to Harv Wembley, the property manager, to sniff out what rent

they were seeking, and to see if that number jibed with the figure I had in my head, which from a recent shoe purchase was 10 1/2.

Wembley, as always, was delighted to hear from me. He said, “We’re still trying to get a guy out to look at that.”

“I’m not calling with a complaint,” I said. He seemed moved, on the verge of tears—another Kodak Landlord/Tenant Moment.

“How can I help you?” he asked.

“I understand Bo’s moving out of 305,” I replied. “I’m calling to express my interest in the opening.”

Wembley got my tenant records of the past 16 years, and noted, “I have down here that in August of 2008, you complained of headaches from an experimental bedbug pesticide we vented into Apartments 303 and 304.”

“I acted rashly,” I said. “Eventually, the headaches subsided, and my sense of smell has been supplanted by an acute sense of doom.”

“Can you handle the rent in 305?” he asked.

“How much is it?” I queried—the only question I’ve asked more often than “How can that be?”

“\$575,” he said. “And another \$575 for security, and another \$575 for first month, and another \$575 for last month, and another \$575 for a leather jacket I’ve been eyeing.”

“I can pay you \$575 now, and the rest when galaxies collide,” I offered.

“Very well,” he said. “Can you move in on the 1st?”

I looked at my calendar. The only thing

I had scribbled in for the 1st was “in like a lion.”

I told him I could make the move.

Wembley seemed happy to extend The Loring’s relationship with a valued tenant.

“Do you know how to work the closer?” he asked.

I told him that Bo, being Bo, always made sure to describe every step of it.

Wembley invited me to his country club for an afternoon of lease-signing and old Scandinavian folk tunes. I declined, opting to forge ahead with preparations for the move.

My initial instinct was not to hire professional movers. But I’d forgotten that I indeed owned numerous weighty possessions, in particular the floor, which The Loring did not provide in its basic package.

It does now. In 2002, an out-of-court settlement resulted in a \$44 million windfall for the attorneys, and autographed Vikings jockstraps for the claimants.

I leafed through the old-fashioned Yellow Pages, which had long served as a dependable TV stand, to find movers. Instinctively, my eyes have always drifted toward the red print—the “we’re not interested in your past” print.

And there it was, an ad for Zendel Brothers Moving & Storage. Their motto includes the word: “We’ll move you *regardless*...”

Oh, my dears, consider the source here, but I burst into tears at the thought of finally having a closet to come out of. Padum-pum.

Bye for now.

Kiss, kiss. **JULIE DAFYDD**

Homophobic Cousin

Dear Ms. Behavior:

My girlfriend and I have reconnected with my 40-year-old cousin, whom I haven't seen in ages. Jason has moved to my neighborhood, and he is a decent guy.

The problem we have is that Jason utters vaguely homophobic statements—about one per evening we spend together. He also makes sure everyone knows (because he's always single) that he's not gay.

Jason invited us to his new place last week, and the walls are covered in vintage homoerotic art. Though it isn't porn, it is unmistakably gay in its undertones—e.g., shirtless, muscle-bound men all pushing a car or fixing an airplane together. I spent a long time looking at the prints.

Jason noticed, and said, "Those were the days, when men were men, and a great value was placed on male buddies."

Male buddies? I think we should clue Jason in. He's probably a gay man, and doesn't know it!

Do you think it's OK for us to connect this to his homophobic comments, which make both my partner and me uncomfortable?

I really do want to keep the relationship with Jason, because most of my family is dead.

What's your advice?

—JOAN

Dear Joan:

Your cousin actually may believe that his interest in male friendship is totally non-sexual. Whether it's roping horses together in a meadow or lifting weights at the gym, strenuous grunting and appreciation of each other's glistening muscles are indeed part of the ritual of man-on-man attachment.

For certain people, such bonding activities may be a prelude to sex. For others, the desire for physical touch remains hidden under the veil of "male friendship." Touching of ten only is sanctioned during pastimes such as fixing things together, contact sports, and other forms of costumed frothage.

You can and should address Jason's overt homophobia. Tell him that his comments make you and your partner ill at ease. Otherwise, it may seem that his remarks are OK with you.

Relentlessly tsking at Jason's derogatory comments may help him catch on. If such subtlety doesn't work, you may need to try administering a small shock with a cattle prod.

Suggesting that Jason needs to recognize his own buried gay impulses, based on his artwork, will be fruitless. It only would alienate him, at least at this early point in your reconnection, particularly if he's as repressed as he seems.

Right now, all you can do is share your own lives with Jason; take him to a gay fete once in a while; and hope that when he awakens to his desire for tea-bagging, you'll be the first to know.

Dear Ms. Behavior:

I have a good friend, Dale, who is kind of

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a loner, but a very nice person. I've known her for a long time.

Because Dale never has a partner, and doesn't have any family, we always have her over when we have gatherings or parties. We sometimes ask our friends to include her in theirs, too, and they usually find her to be good company.

Recently, a couple of our gay male friends made it clear that they didn't want Dale at their holiday party. I thought it was mean, especially because she had nowhere else to go. I wanted to stay home, but my partner insisted I was being stupid. So, we went, but I was angry the whole time.

Do you think I should say something to these Heartless Queens about not opening their homes to the lonely on Christmas?

—MIFFED

Dear Miffed,

It's nice of you to run the Lesbian Lonely Hearts Club, and always to invite Dale. It's also kind that you go the extra step, and encourage your friends to do the same.

But all you really can do is ask. You can't insist that others include your lonely friend. If your friends don't want to do so during Christmas, it's really their decision—and their karma.

You have to decide if you want to go without her, and beyond that, whether you want to remain friends with the Ice Princesses.

MERYL COHN

© 2010 Meryl Cohn. Address questions and correspondence to <msbehavior@aol.com>. She is the author of Do What I Say: Ms. Behavior's Guide to Gay and Lesbian Etiquette (Houghton Mifflin). Signed copies are available directly from the author.

TROLIN, UN DIABLITO ROSA

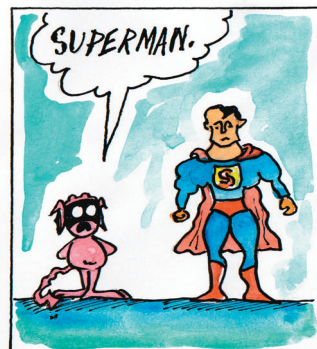
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